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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 001887

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TAGS: [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [RP](#)
SUBJECT: MINDANAO PEACE PROBLEMS

REF: MANILA 1747

Classified By: Political Counselor Scott Bellard
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: According to Cotabato City Mayor Muslimin Sema, detained Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chairman Nur Misuari has formed a new council for talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), excluding Sema and other members of the MNLF-Council of 15. Sema commented the creation of a proposed "Bangsamoro Homeland" was divisive, arguing that Muslims have to accept the reality of the Christian settlers. He predicted that a GRP-MILF peace pact would cause hard line elements of the MILF to splinter and align themselves with alienated members of the MNLF to pursue the goal of an independent Mindanao. Political jockeying within Muslim insurgent groups is an old story, but apparently with some fresh wounds that will complicate the implementation of an eventual peace accord. Overall disarmament will require some genuine new thinking. End Summary.

Factionalized MNLF

¶12. (C) Cotabato City Mayor and MNLF-Council of 15 member Muslimin Sema told poloffs on April 19 that detained MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari had formed new council that has launched discussions with MILF leaders on unity and power sharing. However, he complained that the new group had excluded him as well as other members of the MNLF-Council of 15.

¶13. (U) According to the MNLF's website, Luwuran, a 40-man MNLF delegation headed by Bangsamoro People's Congress (BPC) Chairman Sharif Zain Jali and also including Nur Misuari's nephew Abdurahman Jamasali as well as BPC Secretary-General Bashir Ali met with MILF leaders on April 15 in Sultan Kudurat City, Maguindanao. During this meeting, both sides reportedly voiced support for an immediate and unconditional furlough of detained MNLF Chairman Nur Misuari.

MILF's Bangsamoro Homeland "Divisive"

¶14. (C) Mayor Sema criticized the MILF's proposal for the creation of a "Bangsamoro Homeland" for Muslim communities as "divisive," since Muslims needed to accept the reality that large numbers of Christians also reside in Mindanao. Sema

called instead for implementation of provisions in the 1976 GRP-MNLF Tripoli Agreement for a 13-province autonomous region, which would include Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, North Cotabato, Maguindanao, Sultan Kudurat, Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Davao del Sur, South Cotabato, and Palawan. Article Ten of that agreement also stipulated that "mines and mineral resources fall within the competence of the Central Government, and a reasonable percentage deriving from the revenues of the mines and minerals be fixed for the benefit of the areas of the autonomy."

¶15. (C) Sema warned that a GRP-MILF peace agreement could cause hard core supporters of deceased MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim to break away and then team up with alienated elements of the MNLF to pursue Salamat Hashim's goal of an independent Mindanao. There was also a danger of MNLF factions allying with members of the Abu Sayyaf Group and "other elements capable of violence," according to Sema. He expressed the hope that instead all armed groups -- including the MILF and factions of the MNLF -- could gradually integrate into the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP). He nonetheless warned that genuine disarmament in Mindanao would never be possible as long as traditional politicians and warlords still maintained their own private armies.

¶16. (C) Comment: Further splintering of the MILF in the wake of a peace accord has long been part of everyone's predictions, while the MNLF internal squabbles are stuff of legend -- as well as of the future. These complications will continue to make the peace and stability situation throughout Mindanao difficult to master, and will require some genuine

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new thinking about broader disarmament issues, by necessity confronting more head-on an overall culture of violence and revenge, even among more mainstream groups and leaders.

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